

DRAFT: FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION/RATIFICATION

The Honorable Carlos Gutierrez
Secretary
US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The National Marine Sanctuary System represents a significant contribution to ocean governance in our country. We, the National Marine Sanctuaries Advisory Council Chairpersons, are pleased to welcome you to our team. In that role, we strongly encourage your support for the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act in a manner that maintains or enhances the mission of the National Marine Sanctuary Program and the resources it protects.

The Sanctuary Advisory Councils are comprised of 370 citizens who donate nearly 100,000 hours annually to the management of Sanctuary resources. Currently, 10 of the 13 Sanctuaries, and one Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, have Advisory Councils; the remaining councils are in development. We work with the National Marine Sanctuary Program to provide guidance and advice on the conservation and use of our marine environment. We come from different places and speak with different voices: commercial and recreational users, scientists and educators, indigenous peoples, conservationists and resource managers, elected officials and citizens-at-large. We are broadly experienced in the marine environment and treasure our maritime heritage.

The resources within the National Marine Sanctuary Program are public trust resources, stretching from New England to American Samoa, and from the Great Lakes to the Florida Keys. The National Marine Sanctuary Program is a world-class system of sanctuaries that protect the nation's natural and cultural marine resources and that cover more territory than all our national parks. They are managed together with indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Advisory Councils partner with the program on a wide range of topics: from difficult and controversial environmental protection issues to educating school children. We promote community involvement and stewardship. Each of us is proud of the accomplishments the program and our constituents have achieved over the last 30 years. We are excited about continuing these activities so that these valuable resources are protected for present and future generations.

We urge your support for these national treasures and the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. At your earliest convenience, we encourage you to visit any of the 14 areas protected by our program.

Sincerely,

Chair, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (California)

Chair, Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary (California)

Chair, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (Florida)

Chair, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (Georgia)

Chair, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (California)

Chair, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (Hawaii)

Chair, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (California)

Chair, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (Hawaii)

Chair, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (Washington)

Chair, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (Massachusetts)

Chair, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (Michigan)

Enclosures:

- National brochure
- SAC directory